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Why the AEC Retracted that Falsehood on Nuclear Testing

On Thursday night, March 6, the AEC released its first official account of the underground nuclear test last September 19 in Nevada. On page 6 there appeared this description:

"When the device was detonated, only a few persons of many who witnessed the event from the forward control area, 2½ miles from the ground zero, felt any earth shock, and off-site the earth movement was so slight that it could be recorded only on extremely sensitive seismological instruments. The earth waves were recorded at seismological stations at Los Angeles, about 250 miles, air line, from the shot mesa. *This was the maximum distance at which the shot was recorded.*"

Was Stassen Wrong?

The italics are added. If that italicized statement was true, then Harold Stassen had seriously misinformed the Humphrey subcommittee the preceding Friday. For in his testimony (as reprinted in our last week's issue), Mr. Stassen said "that very small nuclear shot that was put out underground in last year's test was recorded in every seismic instrument within a thousand miles." If the AEC was right, Mr. Stassen was also wrong in asserting that inspection stations at 500 mile intervals could detect secret underground tests.

On Friday morning I phoned the AEC press office to ask how it reconciled that 250 mile claim with dispatches carried by the *New York Times* the morning after the underground test from Toronto and Rome reporting that seismic stations on those cities had picked up the Nevada explosion. I was promised an answer later.

As Far North As Alaska

In the meantime, in the Coast and Geodetic Survey at the Commerce Department, I was told that U. S. government seismologists doubted the Rome and Toronto claims. I was told that the Nevada underground test was, however, detected as far away as Fairbanks, Alaska, about 2300 miles north and at Fayetteville, Ark., about 1,240 miles east. Coast and Geodetic seemed to be unaware of the AEC release. When told that their records conflicted with the AEC claim, officials would not discuss the matter. But shortly afterward the AEC press office phoned to say "there certainly were seismic signals at greater distances" than 250 miles, that Coast and Geodetic claimed to have picked up the test in Alaska, that perhaps misunderstanding had been created because the AEC release spoke of "shocks" rather than seismic signals but that I would be given a definite answer Monday.

While waiting for the AEC's answer on Monday, I got a list of 19 seismic stations in the United States and Canada more than 250 miles from the Nevada test site which are definitely known to have recorded that underground test. Armed with this, I set out to get the reply promised by AEC.

A Reluctant Correction

At the AEC there was reluctance to issue a correction. At one time during the day it was proposed only to drop the final sentence of the passage quoted above, "This was the maximum distance at which the shock was recorded." But this would still have left the impression that Los Angeles, 250 miles away, was the farthest point of record. With public hearings soon to be held by the Humphrey disarmament subcommittee on nuclear testing and its detection, there was danger this deceptive release might be investigated.

Finally, late in the afternoon, the AEC issued a "note to editors and correspondents" asking them to "delete the last two sentences of the second paragraph on page 6" of the March 6 release and to substitute the following sentence: "Seismological stations of the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey as far away as College (near Fairbanks) Alaska, about 2,320 miles from the shot mesa recorded the earth waves." That was all.

Few Got the Significance

This vague bulletin attracted little attention. Tuesday's papers carried no mention of it. But Wednesday, at my press time, when these final lines were revised, the news of the correction finally hit the papers, thanks to a press release given out by Senator Humphrey calling attention to it. We hope the Senator will investigate the incident in his forthcoming public hearings on testing. Were it not for the publicity achieved by his own press release, few people would know of the correction. The AEC document, even as corrected, is deceptive. It still says the "earth movement was so slight that it could be recorded only on extremely sensitive seismological instruments." The unwary reader might easily imagine that the Alaska recording was a freak of sensitivity. No one would know from the AEC statement even as corrected that Alaska was only one of 19 stations more than 250 miles away which detected the test, nor that it was also recorded as far east as Arkansas, 1200 miles away. The *New York Times* dispatch from Nevada the morning after the explosion last September said AEC scientists "predicted that the explosion would not be detectable more than a few hundred miles away." This is what the AEC would still like the public to believe in its campaign to sell the idea that nuclear tests can be held in secret. The false press release with its reluctant and inadequate correction deserves a fuller airing.

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Clearing the Way to Make Nuclear Arms Universal, Nuclear War Inescapable

Cong. Holifield Lifts the Curtain on Secret Hearings to Revise Atomic Law

By Congressman Chet Holifield

On January 27, 1958, the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission delivered to Congress a legislative draft of a bill to amend the Atomic Energy Act of 1954. The letter of transmittal stated that the draft had been approved by the Bureau of the Budget, the legislative clearing house for the President and his Administration. Our Committee has been holding hearings on the two bills, S. 3165 and H. R. 10348, in executive session. . . .

Among other things the legislation provides for,

1. The transfer of atomic weapon information to other nations. (Weapon design blueprints).

2. The transfer of 'special nuclear material' to other nations for *military* purposes, (the basic bomb material, plutonium and U 235).

3. The transfer of non-nuclear weapons components to other nations (the electro-mechanical hardware of an atomic bomb).

4. The transfer of weapon delivery systems (this could mean cannons, atomic weapons, bombing planes, missiles and submarines). [Parentheses are in the original text—IFS.]

One Man's Decision

The legislative draft places responsibility for international transfer of atomic weapon information, parts and bomb materials on the President of the United States.

If this legislation becomes law we enter a new phase of international peril. We cross the threshold on a journey from which there may be no return. The proponents of this step claim it is necessary to save the crumbling NATO. It is a most important step. It should receive wide publicity and serious debate in the Congress and in every forum of public opinion. . . .

Should the power of distribution of atomic weapons to other nations be placed in the hands of one man — even though he be a good man—the President of a great nation—a great democratic nation? Or, should the problem of distributing nuclear weapons be decided through Congressional consideration and debate under the treaty process? . . .

Three nations now possess atomic-hydrogen weapons, the U. S., the U. S. S. R. and Great Britain. Until now we have hoped that a safe agreement to prevent a nuclear war could be arranged between these three nations. . . . This legislation allows the U S. (through presidential decision) to open the door to creating a fourth atomic nation, a fifth, a sixth, and many more.

This warning by Congressman Holifield (D. Cal.), a member of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, is from a speech which he delivered March 3 at Ohio State University in Columbus. The press elsewhere seems to have ignored it.

Does this mean we have given up our hopes for a peaceful agreement among the present three nations? Does it mean that we have deserted and abandoned the logic of limiting the number of nations possessing atomic-hydrogen weapons, while we negotiate for a safe agreement against nuclear war?

An Atomic Pandora's Box

As a supporter of the NATO charter for collective security, I am aware of the pressure now being exerted to obtain nuclear weapons from our allies who do not have such weapons. I believe the upgrading of collective military strength is necessary if NATO is to be preserved. But there are many ways to strengthen NATO . . . without opening a Pandora's box of unknown and unpredictable woes.

I believe in the wide exchange of scientific information and realize the secrets of science cannot be hidden from the people of other nations. But we do not distribute hand grenades to our children and hope they will not be tempted to experiment. . . .

The question of deciding who the "fourth nation" should be immediately faces us when we remove the present legislative restrictions. The first nation that comes to mind is France, and then possibly West Germany . . . NATO, SEATO and other nations would be eligible. . . .

We can be sure that Mr. Krushchev will make the most of this event. . . . In fancy, I can hear Mr. Krushchev now: *". . . We have zealously guarded the custody of our own defensive atomic weapons. Today, the U. S. Congress and their President enacted a law permitting the distribution of atomic hydrogen weapons to all their allies. . . . One careless and irresponsible nation, one madman, can now launch the third great war, a nuclear war, which will destroy civilization. I charge the United States with blame for such a war when it occurs. . . ."*

What would be the impact of such a speech on India, Japan, and the other uncommitted nations of the world? Would it enhance the international prestige of the United States, or would it place us on the defensive in world opinion? Would it increase or decrease the likelihood of nuclear war?

Dulles Wants Nuclear Arms Available All Around "the Sino-Soviet Perimeter"

". . . the resourcefulness of those who serve our nation in the field of science and weapon engineering now shows that it is possible to alter the character of nuclear weapons. It seems now that their use need not involve vast destruction and widespread harm to humanity. Recent tests point to the possibility of possessing nuclear weapons the destructiveness and radiation effects of which can be confined substantially to predetermined targets.

"In the future it may thus be feasible to place less reliance upon deterrence of vast retaliatory power. It may be possible to defend countries by nuclear power so mobile, or so placed, as to make military invasion with conventional forces a hazardous attempt. . . .

"Thus, in contrast to the 1950 decade, it may be that by the 1960 decade the nations which are around the Sino-Soviet perimeter can possess an effective defense against full-scale conventional attack and thus confront any aggressor with the choice between failing or himself initiating nuclear war. . . ."

—Secretary Dulles, Foreign Affairs, October, 1957.

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Scientist Sees Bleak Future If We Do Not Negotiate Arms Control Now

Dr. Teller Accused of "Willful Distortion" in "Blind Hatred" of the USSR

By Dr. Harrison Brown

Excerpted from the Gideon Seymour memorial lecture March 9 at the University of Minnesota. Dr. Brown, professor of geochemistry at the California Institute of Technology, worked in the wartime Manhattan Project.

The most obvious threat to our survival today is nuclear war with the Soviet Union. For more than twelve years we have been locked in an arms race with the Russians. Both parties in this race fully realize that war between them is a very real possibility.

We are engaging in an intensive program aimed at developing a variety of nuclear anti-plane and anti-missile devices. We recognize that in the event of war far more nuclear explosives may be detonated in the process of defending ourselves than in striking at the enemy. We recognize further that the radioactive products of these explosions can result in far more deaths than those resulting from the bombs which are aimed at cities. In part for this reason we have been working intensively on the development of a so-called "clean" H-bomb.

Statements Which Can't Be Checked

There are many sincere proponents of the view that massive preparations for massive retaliation and for limited war represent the only realistic path towards security at the present time. Outstanding among these proponents is a group of men, symbolized in the public mind by Dr. Edward Teller, and who exerts enormous influence upon our policies in this area. Indeed, the combination of Dr. Teller's position, his prestige, his knowledge and the iron wall of secrecy which enables him to make statements which cannot easily be checked or refuted by critics outside and often inside the government, gives this group a degree of influence in the area of policy formation which rivals that of any group of persons in our country in modern times.

It is amply clear that he is convinced that any agreement on our part aimed at achieving some degree of arms limitation would be suicidal. It seems clear to me that Dr. Teller is motivated by a deep-rooted hatred of the Soviet Union which borders upon the fanatic. From this hatred there stems the belief that *no* agreement with the Soviet Union can be relied upon. I believe this blind fear can in the long run lead to disaster.

At this point I should like to make my position with respect to the Soviet Union clear. I dislike her form of government as intensely as I dislike any totalitarian regime. I believe she would, if given the opportunity, dominate the world. Her recent behaviour in Hungary was despicable.

But I do not believe that the Soviet leaders are stupid, nor that they are necessarily blinded by preconceived goals to the extent that they would attempt to achieve those goals by means which would seriously jeopardize their own security.

We have seen that the policy as prescribed by Dr. Teller is to continue the arms race into the indefinite future. Where might such a policy take us in the long run if by some miracle catastrophe does not intervene in the meantime?

Recently I have had the opportunity of participating in a series of discussions concerning these problems which have been held under the sponsorship of the National Planning Association. A group, composed about 50 percent of scientists, a number of whom possess considerable knowledge of weapons systems, has been surveying the general technical and political problems of disarmament. The picture which unfolds is not a pretty one.

As nuclear weapons are increasingly taken for granted in fighting small wars, the technique of making them and of using them will become world-wide—and here I mean *all* nuclear weapons ranging from the artillery shell to the super bomb. I suspect that about 15 nations will be in the business of manufacturing nuclear explosives within the next 25 years.

Within this anarchic framework there will be "little" wars in which tactical nuclear weapons will be used. We are asked to believe that human beings will handle themselves intelligently and cooly in these wars and that everyone's ability to retaliate with massive destruction will result in stabilization.

The degree of wishful thinking which is involved in ths view is, I believe, fantastic. In a rapidly changing world, such a situation would be about as stable as a billiard balanced on a pin.

Even If Russia Disappeared

I am convinced that if the Soviet Union were, by some magic, to disappear tomorrow our situation would not be greatly eased. I am convinced that as industrialization continues its relentless spread, within the framework of international anarchy, we are going to be faced by new Germanies, new Japans and new Soviet Unions.

Of all of our short-range goals, the one of overwhelming urgency, it seems to me, is to secure agreements which would make it extremely difficult for the Soviet Union and the United States in engage in large-scale nuclear war and which would severely hinder, if not completely stop, the spread of nuclear military technology to the rest of the world. Dr. Teller believes that any such agreements would work to our disadvantage because we could not be certain that the Soviet Union might not "bootleg" tests. I challenge this view, and in doing so I do not stand alone in the scientific world.

I believe that Dr. Teller is willfully distorting the realities of the situation. I believe that it is possible for us to secure agreements with the Soviet Union to stop tests and I believe further that the agreements could be of such a nature that the Soviet Union would adhere to them because it would be very much to her advantage to do so.

Disingenuous Argument

"Because a nuclear 'bomb' can be made to have a yield as small as that of a firecracker, it is technically correct, but highly misleading, for a public official to state that we can't be sure of detecting all tests. Certain officials such as President Eisenhower, Prime Minister Macmillan and Dr. Edw. Teller have made general statements which to the public appear in conflict with the findings of this paper [that nuclear testing can be policed]. . . . These officials are relying on the technicality of ultra-low yield nuclear 'tests.'"

—Jay Orear, Asst. Prof., Physics, Columbia, in the March issue Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists.

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Fulbright Substitute Provides Fair Hearing But Keeps Political Test on Right to Travel

Senate Liberals Respond to Pressure Against Hennings Passport Bill

Protesting letters in the wake of our March 3 issue exposing the Hennings bill to validate the State Department's passport procedures seem to have had an effect. Several Senators wrote readers explaining that they had endorsed the bill on the strength of Hennings' reputation. Hennings in turn blames the bill on poor staff work. Unfortunately his staff is not what it used to be. A year ago he purged the liberals on it. Benjamin Ginzburg, a scholarly and devoted civil libertarian, was dismissed as research director of the Hennings civil liberties subcommittee; Langdon West, the Senator's liberal administrative assistant, was exiled to a minor post. The Senator's new assistant is from the State Department.

The ACLU Opposed

Several of the Senators who lent their name to the bill are insisting on public hearings. Public hearings may prove embarrassing to Hennings. The American Civil Liberties Union submitted a vigorous and uncompromising brief by Osmond K. Fraenkel as amicus curiae in the pending passport cases and would oppose the Hennings bill if hearings were held.

The unhappiest consequence of the bill's introduction for Hennings was the attitude taken by the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, of which the Senator is a director. On Sunday, March 2, the "P-D" ran an equivocal editorial about the bill, headed "Loose Language, Good Bill." But three days later, the paper shifted its position in an editorial called "Coincidence or Booby-Trap?" which called attention as we did to the remarkable parallelism in language between the Hennings bill and the Walter passport bill (HR 5612) and the way in which both embody the substantive regulations of the State Department and uphold its "faceless informer" procedures. Not a single one of the liberal Senators who endorsed the Hennings bill would have endorsed the bill if it came from Walter. This proves that a cabbage, unlike the rose, may be made to smell sweeter by any other name.

Some unhappy Senate liberals are turning as a compromise to a little noticed bill (S 2770) introduced in the closing days of Congress last August by Fulbright. The State Department, however, would rather have no bill than this one, since it provides for "a full and fair hearing before a board of passport appeals." That legal formula would bar the use of undisclosed evidence and anonymous informers.

More Muscovite Than Liberal

On the other hand the Fulbright bill, like the Hennings bill, shows the decay of a true liberal philosophy among liberals. It also provides for a political test of the right to travel and echoes the Department's regulation which bars not only Communist party members but those who continue "to act in furtherance of the interests and under the discipline of the Communist party." If it is dangerous to let a man travel abroad because (like Paul Robeson) he may make speeches which the State Department regards as advancing the Communist cause, why let him travel and speak at home, where he can cause more damage? The logic of the department's travel regulations and of these bills is not the logic of the First Amendment. It is the logic of police states; Moscow, too, will not let those travel abroad whom it suspects of unorthodox views.

Hat's Off in The Soldier Cases

Our hat is off in the soldiers' discharge cases to: Senator Hennings, for giving less than honorably discharged GI's their first public hearing before his civil liberties subcommittee two years ago and for following through in pressing the Defense Department to change its regulations; to the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee for sponsoring and helping to finance the successful appeal to the Supreme Court; and to Secretary of the Army Brucker for at once obeying the Court's mandate and giving honorable discharges to Howard D. Abramowitz and John Henry Harmon III without putting them to the trouble of further proceedings and for amending the Army discharge regulations. The victory in the soldier cases reinstates the army rule in effect before McCarthy in the Peress case frightened the military into abandoning the now restored traditional rule that a serviceman's discharge was based on his conduct in the service. The Army's attitude contrasts sharply with that of the civilian branches which are still unwilling to implement the Cole decision limiting security discharges to sensitive positions.

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